

not to make it more expensive and say if you don't buy the government-approved care—even if you don't want what it provides—then we are going to coerce you to do it. We are going to penalize you for it. This is bad for America and hurts people instead of giving them the helping hand they need when it comes to health care.

We are going to have a lot more to say about how we need to repeal and replace ObamaCare with more affordable health insurance that gives people access to the doctors and services they want and need. But on the present bill, no one denies the need for a long-term permanent solution to the way we pay health care providers under Medicare. So for the benefit of physicians, our seniors, and the American people, we need to do this, but we also need to find a way to pay for it.

I am hoping we pass this legislation today. I believe the current provision expires at midnight tonight. It is important that we stop kicking the can down the road and we allow our family doctors to do what we want them to do most, which is to focus on what they do best and what our families need the most. At the same time, it will ensure seniors access to the care they need. Such a meaningful solution is long overdue.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Michigan.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I think the American people deserve to see the contrast between how nominees were treated in the last decade, during the Bush administration, versus how they are treated in this decade, during the Obama administration.

When former President Bush nominated John Ashcroft to be U.S. Attorney General, it was controversial. I was one of 42 Democrats who opposed the nomination. Yet it only took 42 days for John Ashcroft to get a vote on confirming his appointment because neither I nor other Democrats stood in the way and blocked actually having a vote.

Now, I agree that was a different time, where filibusters were not used every single day on every single issue, unfortunately. But I remember that at that time our Republican colleagues came to the floor and said: Elections have consequences. When a President is elected, he or she has the opportunity to put forward their nominees and have a vote. Day after day people came to the floor and said: Just let us vote.

Just let us vote. And we did let the vote happen.

As of today, President Obama's nominee for Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, has waited 157 days and counting, and we intend to count the days. In fact, since the Judiciary Committee reported Loretta Lynch's nomination out of committee, she has now waited longer for a vote on the Senate floor than the last seven attorneys general combined—seven attorneys general combined. She has waited longer than seven attorneys general combined.

The U.S. Senate has the constitutional responsibility to provide advice and consent to the President as it relates to his appointments. That is a serious responsibility and we are not asking that someone vote yes if they want to vote no. They have a right to vote no. We have had enough Members now come forward that it is clear she actually has the votes. We have had enough Members indicate they would support her that we know we could get a vote on the floor and that she would, in fact, be confirmed as the Attorney General. But everyone has the right to state their piece, to vote as their conscience would have them vote. Unfortunately, our Republican colleagues have so far withheld the respect given to other Presidents—to President Bush. They have withheld that from this President.

If this is frustrating to me, I can only imagine how frustrating it is to Loretta Lynch, who I know is eager to get on with the work of our Nation's top law enforcement official. I had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Lynch in early December. She impressed me with her passion for upholding the rule of law and her belief that law enforcement could be a partner in building stronger and more cohesive communities. I talked to her about how the Justice Department could play a role in supporting ethnic diversity in communities such as Detroit and Flint and other communities across Michigan.

Loretta Lynch understands the devastating effect racial profiling has had on the relationship between the police and the public, which is why I am pleased to learn of her support for police body cameras and so many other policies that would help in that regard. In addition, she understands the threat posed by those who would intimidate Americans from participating in elections.

I regret Loretta Lynch has not yet been granted the opportunity to play her role in promoting access to the polls and preventing groups from being disenfranchised. I regret our FBI, with all it must do for the safety and security of Americans, does not have a permanent Attorney General to direct it. I regret there is not a permanent Attorney General to advise prosecutors about actions to take against banks that commit fraud against homeowners. I regret our Republican colleagues are continuing to perform the same stunts in the majority as they did

in the minority: to govern by holding government functions hostage.

Those who oppose the nomination have every right to vote no, every right to fight to defeat this nomination, but if they continue to refuse to give the advice and counsel and perform the duty they are sworn to uphold under the Constitution and continue to block a simple vote on a nomination from the President of the United States for Attorney General of this country, they are doing a disservice, I believe, to our country.

We have heard so often from people they are so tired of Congress obstructing and not acting. I would urge colleagues to get on about the business of a nomination that has been held on this floor for too long—too long—and 157 days is too long. It does a disservice to all of us to see this continue. We need Loretta Lynch as our Attorney General.

We have a lot of business to conduct in the Senate and a lot of very important topics coming up. We need to get about the business of allowing this vote. However it goes is how it goes. We have indicated, we have the votes if we are allowed to vote, but everyone has a right to express themselves. Let us put in place a competent, strong Attorney General for the country and then move on to other serious issues that we have to address in the Senate. It is time to vote.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

SGR LEGISLATION

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I have been a strong advocate and a believer that it is time for us to fix the physicians' payment method for Medicare and Medicaid—for the providing of health care by doctors—and put it on a permanent basis right now.

We have 17 times passed last-minute legislation to avoid what now would be a 21-percent cut in doctors' reimbursement rates for doing Medicare work. That is not acceptable. We need to end that. They do not need to be worried every year whether or not Congress is going to cut their pay. In fact, they cannot do the work with a 20-percent cut. They will not do it, they can't do it financially, and it would be devastating to Medicare. I believe that, and I think all of us believe in that.

The 17 different times when this issue has come up since 2003 we have paid for it. Republicans in particular have insisted that we will find the money through some sort of other reduction in government spending and move that over to pay for this critical need, without which Medicare would collapse.

I thought now that we want to do it permanently, it should be done in a way that is financially sound and does not add to the debt and has good policy in it.

Some of my colleagues have already talked about the policy that would be